

July 13, 2010

To whom this may concern:

Hearing on Social Security at 75 Years: More Necessary Now than Ever

I am writing to express my dismay over the damaging affects of the GPO/WEP on the residents of Massachusetts and the residents of 14 or 15 other states in our union who may have given their time and energies to work as state or municipal employees.

My name is Susan Fielding and I have been a life long resident of Springfield, Massachusetts. I am speaking as an individual. However I currently work as a public school teacher in Springfield and am a member of the Massachusetts Teachers' Association and a member of the National Teachers' Association.

I have worked since I was 14 years old with some time out of the work force to raise 4 children. I did work several years under social security and am currently working a second job where I pay into social security. I do receive statements from social security that indicate I have paid enough into social security which makes me eligible at retirement for benefits. However, my contributions have been paid on very low paying or part time jobs. The money paid in does have an impact on the benefits paid out. Then comes the GPO, what do you think I will be able to get from my contributions?

Another horrifying fact I had to come to terms with was the death of my husband and the realization that I won't be able to collect widow's benefits from the monies he paid in because I am a public employee. This was a major shock to me when I became aware of the WEP. I'm sure my husband would be turning in his grave if he knew I will not get any of his social security benefits. One of the concerns he expressed as he was dying from cancer was for my financial security. When he died in 1995 I was working as a paraprofessional for the Springfield Public Schools while I was completing my degree for teaching. I was earning less than \$10,000.00 a year.

I began working in the public school system as a paraprofessional in my late thirties. I completed my teaching degree after my husband died and will never reach the full retirement benefit through the teacher retirement system. Because I was not aware of the GPO/WEP provisions in social security I had expected to supplement my teacher retirement with my widow's benefits. How distressing it was to find out this will not be possible.

I am truly at a loss trying to understand this. Why are those of us who have made and continue to make contributions to social security denied the right to collect on them? The monies my husband paid in were not paid out to him or his family. Is this a means of unjust punishment for working in professions that give back to society? Can anyone give a reasonable explanation?

Please consider my words as you celebrate the 75 years of Social Security and the real fact that for some of us it is "More Necessary Now than Ever."

Respectfully,
Susan Fielding
MA

